

EXHIBIT H

Cuba's Stars

The island's oldest and most venerable smokes have been superseded by the new kids on the block BY JAMES SUCKLING

Cuba has made many great cigars since I first wrote about the island's "star cigars" in 1992. Sure, there have been some ups and downs in quality, and the worst period ever—from 1999 to 2001, when as many as one out of five cigars exported did not draw properly—has long passed. Now that those days are gone, a new age for quality Cuban cigars is here.

Today's best Cuban cigars, in my opinion, are the most consumer-friendly ever. They have been created with the smoker in mind. They cater to the wants and needs we have as lovers of the leaf, and to the modern life we all aspire to.

Take, for example, the recently released Montecristo Petit Edmundo. If there has ever been a "now" cigar, it's this one. It's short, fat and flavorful. Measuring 52 ring gauge by 4 1/3 inches, it delivers the most in smoking pleasure in the shortest amount of time. The same is true for the Hoyo de Monterrey Petit Robusto, which is as short as the Edmundo but a tiny bit thinner at 50 ring gauge.

These cigars are the abridged versions of the originals: the Montecristo Edmundo and the Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure No. 2. It's that inch or so less of each cigar that makes them near-perfect smokes for many of us.

"It's the perfect one-coffee smoke," says Enrique (Kiki) Lopez of La Casa del Habano cigar shop at the Partagas factory in Havana. "My customers love the Petit Edmundo. You can smoke it in 10 or 15 minutes, which is about the same time it takes to drink a good Cuban coffee."

He's slightly exaggerating. It takes

me a little longer to smoke a Petit Edmundo and a little shorter to consume a café Cubano. But you get the idea. None of us has the same amount of time to enjoy a great cigar that we used to, and that doesn't take into account the difficulty of discovering

a place to enjoy one. But somehow we do.

I have spent many an enjoyable moment recently, smoking a Petit Edmundo on the terrace of a bar or café in Los Angeles, even though the city has some of the most draconian antismoking laws in the world. I have even taken my petit smoke for a short walk down the street to a nearby park to enjoy it in solitude, free from protest or indignation from passersby. It's the same thing with smoking in your car. Yes, it's come to that, but there's no use complaining.

That's the biggest change in the last decade in Cuban cigars, and cigars in general. In the 1990s, the star cigars in the market were double coronas, in particular the Hoyo de Monterrey Double Corona. CIGAR AFICIONADO rated it 99 points in 1992, and it became a legend among cigar lovers around the world. It became so sought after that it became nearly impossible to find. I know one multimillionaire in Toronto who sent his private jet down to Havana to pick up 20 boxes after he couldn't find them anywhere else.

The 49 ring by 7-inch cigar is still excellent, but who has the time to smoke one? I recently smoked a 2003 production from a cedar cabinet of 50 that was one of the best I've had in years. But sales of the Hoyo double are not what they used to be. "It's a shame, but people don't have the time to smoke big cigars anymore," lamented Edward Sahakian of the Davidoff cigar shop in London. He still has stocks of Hoyo and Punch Double Coronas from the 1997 vintage for sale.

Nonetheless, the large Montecristo No. 2, which many aficionados fondly

TODAY'S STARS

Montecristo No. 2 97

The classic torpedo that no one can duplicate gives you all the cedar, spice and tobacco character you can hope for. Always draws like a dream.

Cohiba Siglo VI 96

A combination of richness and finesse gives just the right combination of power and class. Cool smoke.

Partagas Serie D No. 3 Edición Limitada 95

This always delivers loads of roasted coffee bean and tobacco character, while the typical Partagas decadence surfaces with each puff.

Montecristo Petit Edmundo 94

A concentrated version of the Edmundo gives you more spice, more cedar and more pleasure all in a quicker format. The perfect cigar for those in a hurry.

Montecristo Edmundo 93

This gets better and better with lots of spicy, cedar character and a full, rich finish.

Trinidad Robusto Extra 93

The creamy texture and cedar notes say Cohiba, but the spicy, light earth and vanilla flavors say Trinidad.

Hoyo de Monterrey Petit Robusto 92

The rich, toasty and decadent character stimulates each taste bud in a elegant, creamy way. Quick satisfaction.

Partagas Serie D No. 4 91

This is now the biggest-selling Cuban robusto and always delivers plenty of spicy, earthy, almost decadent character. A classic Habano.

James Suckling tasted these cigars non-blind in Havana.